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Pattern of conferences

The PaperSmart concept

Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. At its sixty-seventh session, having considered the report of the Committee on Conferences for 2012 (A/67/32) and the relevant report of the Secretary-General (A/67/127 and Corr.1), in resolution 67/237 (sect. IV, para. 21) the General Assembly requested me to elaborate the scope of the PaperSmart concept in order to better serve Member States, bearing in mind the principle of language parity among the six official languages of the United Nations, and to report thereon to the Assembly at its sixty-eighth session. The present report is submitted in response to that request.

2. The General Assembly has paid close attention to the potential of modern technologies as a way to enhance the effectiveness of servicing intergovernmental processes over a long period of time. For example, in its resolution 55/285, the Assembly noted that there was a need to enhance the use of modern technology and information technology within the United Nations, including in negotiation processes within the Organization (annex, sect. VII, para. 23), and requested the Secretary-General to submit proposals to the Assembly to provide members of delegations inside meeting rooms with access to the Internet, together with electronic access to texts of statements and reports and, in the case of reports, simultaneous access to texts in all official languages (ibid., para. 24).

3. As long ago as 2001, the tasks set before the Secretariat have remained unfulfilled owing to competing priorities and generational, cultural and technological divides between the various clients of the United Nations conference services. However, further technological progress and the expansion of modern information and communications technology (ICT) tools, including the proliferation of various mobile devices, has opened new opportunities for managing conference documentation in a more effective and cost-efficient way and at the same time

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facilitating the flow of information and documentation. This is how the business model for PaperSmart meetings servicing developed. It is important to understand that the goal is not to modernize the way the United Nations conducts its business for the sake of modernization, neither is it a fight against paper. Rather, it is a modest effort aimed at leveraging existing widespread technologies to optimize the delivery of parliamentary documentation to meeting participants, making it easier for them and for meetings services to operate more effectively.

4. In developing its proposal for the PaperSmart concept, the Secretariat took into consideration the guidance provided by the various Charter bodies with regard to electronically servicing meetings and conferences of the Organization, both at and away from Headquarters. These guiding principles, reflected in various resolutions and decisions,[1] can be summarized as follows: to make paper copies of documents always available; to ensure that technical solutions are globally compatible; to support multilingualism, including the simultaneous distribution of documents; and to ensure security of information and guarantee business continuity.

5. Through the PaperSmart business model, the Secretariat is addressing all the above guiding principles in a comprehensive manner in order to provide members of delegations in meeting rooms, and elsewhere, for instance in national capitals, with easy access to all documents as well as relevant information regarding any official meetings — ongoing, past or forthcoming.

II. Overview of progress

6. Addressing the business needs of delegations requires a combination of meetings services. The PaperSmart business model therefore has four components, the two most important of which are the portal and printing on demand. The web-based portal allows meetings and documents to be managed and is linked to other electronic tools of the Organization, such as gMeets and the Official Document System (ODS). The printing-on-demand component enables the Organization to reduce waste by providing hard copies only to those clients who request them. The two other components are e-publishing and various portable media solutions, such as memory sticks and quick-response codes. The PaperSmart concept thus ensures that, in addition to digital copies, paper will always be available to meeting participants on demand.

7. Early efforts to circulate parliamentary documents electronically in meeting rooms were successful at the United Nations Office at Nairobi which has been employing PaperSmart servicing for its meetings since 2008 when the Government of Qatar offered to host the joint eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer and the twentieth meeting of the Parties to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer in Doha using the PaperSmart format. The Government of Qatar financed the development of a software solution and its implementation and also acquired the requisite ICT infrastructure and laptops for distribution to participants.

[1] Economic and Social Council decision 2003/277; General Assembly resolution 57/283 B, sect. III, para. 23; resolution 58/250, sect. V, para. 1; resolution 59/265 sect. V, para. 4; resolution 62/225, sect. III, para. 4; resolution 63/248 sect. IV, para. 4; resolution 63/309, para. 7; resolution 64/301, para. 19; resolution 66/233, sect. IV, para. 23; Human Rights Council decision 19/119.

Following this experience, other treaty bodies under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, started organizing their meetings using PaperSmart. For that purpose they have developed their own internal capacity to run a PaperSmart infrastructure and manage the new documentation and information distribution workflow. In general, States members of such bodies have welcomed the initiative, as witnessed in the surveys on conference services administered by the United Nations Office at Nairobi. At the request of UNEP and the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), the Office at Nairobi followed through by servicing UNEP and UN-Habitat meetings in a PaperSmart fashion, including building its own ICT infrastructure and human resources capacity. The business model of the PaperSmart solution for meetings serviced by the Office fall into line with the four components of the solution offered at Headquarters.

8. In Vienna, in addition to the standard tools such as ODS, electronic circulation of parliamentary documentation and publications is facilitated by the use of CD-ROMs and USB sticks for major conferences and by departmental websites and eCorrespondence. As part of the PaperSmart services, digital recordings of meetings are offered to replace or supplement written meeting records. In 2012, in response to the request of the Committee on the Peaceful Uses of Outer Space to replace their unedited written meeting records with digital audio recordings, the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management rolled out an inexpensive, simple solution that is built on existing tools and uses advanced technologies. Another application for the PaperSmart toolkit, the "VIC-online" is being prototyped. It is an adaptive website for conference participants of the Vienna-based organizations designed to work on laptops, tablets and hand-held devices. The website will provide information on conferences taking place in the Vienna International Centre, with meetings information search, documentation download, access to digital recordings of meetings and notes for delegates.

9. Based on that experience, an integrated PaperSmart business model was developed at United Nations Headquarters by the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management in late 2011 and early 2012. In addition to the portal component tested in Nairobi and Vienna, the Headquarters model, which has since become accepted by the other three principal duty stations as the harmonized Secretariat-wide solution, added the three other components referred to in paragraph 6 above, which directly addressed the generational, cultural and technological gaps identified in the earlier pilots.

10. This integrated model was tested at various meetings and conferences at Headquarters before its implementation at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from 20 to 22 June 2012. During the second half of 2012 and in 2013, the model was further tested at meetings of a number of entities of the United Nations system, including: the Executive Board meetings of major funds and programmes such as the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the United

Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS); the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities; the Committee of Experts on Public Administration of the Economic and Social Council; the Commission on Population and Development, the Statistical Commission; the Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues; the Committee on Information; the Panel of External Auditors of the United Nations; the Specialized Agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (Technical Group meeting); and the Sixth Committee during the sixty-seventh session of the General Assembly.

11. With the Division of Conference Management of the United Nations Office at Geneva as the servicing secretariat, the integrated PaperSmart model was deployed at the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and the meetings of the six subsidiary bodies and mechanisms associated with it, held in Doha from 26 November to 7 December 2012, and at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in Geneva from 22 April to 3 May 2013.

12. The second session of the Preparatory Committee was the first PaperSmart meeting to be hosted by the Division of Conference Management in Geneva, for which all pre- and in-session documents and official statements were made available on the Integrated Sustainable PaperSmart Services (ISPS) Portal in real time. The roles and responsibilities of the conference staff of the Division were brought up to date through in-house training which covered all the official languages of the United Nations.

13. To evaluate various aspects of the PaperSmart services, the Division of Conference Management conducted an electronic survey which received a high response rate: 97 respondents out of a total of 320 participants. The respondents were delegates from the Permanent Missions accredited to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Government officials from the capitals, delegates from duty stations other than Geneva, representatives of non-governmental organizations and experts. The survey targeted three PaperSmart features: the ISPS Portal, the quick-response code posters and technical support. In terms of the ISPS Portal, the respondents were asked to rate the ease of finding information on the portal, the availability of documents on the Portal and the speed of the Portal. Most of the respondents rated these features as good. The Division also evaluated usage of mobile devices to access documents on the Portal, as a means of participating in the meeting, with the following results: 89 per cent of respondents indicated that they had used their own devices (such as a laptop, tablet or smartphone) to participate in the meeting and of those who used a smartphone, 60 per cent used an iPhone, 25 per cent an Android and 8.3 per cent a BlackBerry. Furthermore, 63 per cent of the survey respondents indicated that they had submitted statements and 57 per cent of those had submitted their statements electronically. The PaperSmart concept involves a print-on-demand counter, which operates in the same manner as a distribution counter but does not involve additional staff. Twenty-six per cent of respondents requested a paper copy from the distribution counter while 50 per cent printed their own copies of documents and brought them to the meeting. Of those, 63 per cent of respondents indicated that they would reconsider printing and bringing paper copies to the meeting if devices such as laptops or tablets were made available at the meeting. Seventy-two per cent of respondents assessed the PaperSmart concept as environmentally friendly; 63 per cent saw it as a cost-saving

measure for the Organization and 61 per cent assessed the distribution of paper copies as not in contradiction with the PaperSmart concept.

14. The platform used to service the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (and the Economic and Social Council) in Geneva was the ISPS Portal. In collaboration with the Information and Communication Technology Service, the Division of Conference Management provided 12 Wi-Fi hotspot access points in the plenary rooms and throughout the Palais des Nations in order to enable wireless connection to the ISPS Portal and seamless downloading of documents and other information by the delegates. The Secretariat team also provided technical support to integrate scanners into the ISPS workflow and to configure networks and computers.

III. Elaborating the scope of the PaperSmart concept

15. In section IV, paragraph 21, of resolution 67/237, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to it on eight specific aspects of the PaperSmart concept, including the implications for financial and human resources and budgetary and procurement procedures, and the expected time frame for implementation at the four main United Nations duty stations.

Technological benchmarks, including but not limited to data security and services provided to Member States

16. The core technological component of the PaperSmart model is the Portal, which was first developed by the Office of Information and Communications Technology in New York and then later taken over by the Information and Communications Technology Section of the Department for General Assembly and Conference Management.

17. The Portal is scalable and modular for the meetings of all Charter and calendar bodies of the United Nations, that is, new meetings can be created automatically by deploying a direct link to the main Secretariat tool for organizing meetings of the Secretariat — gMeets. Documents on the Portal are accessed through another global tool — gDoc. As this Portal can be employed at all duty stations, its use harmonizes the work processes involved and presents an integrated global management solution to all entities of the Secretariat servicing a meeting or conference of the United Nations, across all duty stations, including those away from Headquarters.

18. Thanks to the close involvement of the information security focal points in the Office of Information and Communications Technology, the Portal uses industry-standard security monitoring tools for intrusion detection, web application security, log management and vulnerability assessment to ensure information security and data integrity.

19. The Portal is simple to use. It mirrors the way in which meetings of the Organization are held, through the use of a provisional agenda with links to related documents for each agenda item, such as pre-session and in-session papers, statements, press releases and even audio and video files, as appropriate. In servicing Member States in this manner, delegates will always have all the relevant documents in one place under each agenda item — even if they are in a remote location.

Implications for financial and human resources and budgetary and procurement procedures

20. The lessons learned from more than 350 pilot PaperSmart meetings have demonstrated that, as a result of the deployment of the model, fewer human resources are required to service meetings compared with those serviced conventionally, provided that staff members, especially support staff, have been cross-trained in all aspects of their tasks. This efficiency gain may translate into a reduction of additional temporary capacity needs and into an enhanced capability to service meetings. Permanent staffing levels will not be affected by this change. Although limited additional posts are needed to ensure maintenance of the portal and other functions, the reduction of staffing needs in the meeting rooms makes the PaperSmart model definitely more cost-effective. Human resources currently used for distributing desk-to-desk paper copies have been trained to scan statements and upload official documents on the Portal. There are no budgetary or procurement needs since the business model and the Portal have been developed internally and within existing resources.

Implementation time frames at the four main duty stations

21. The PaperSmart model has been tested and deployed as a viable solution for major conferences and meetings at two of the four main duty stations and two major conferences away from Headquarters. If approved by the General Assembly, the PaperSmart business model could be gradually implemented at all four duty stations, budgeted through section 2 of the proposed programme budget during the biennium 2014-2015, with their active involvement.

Integration of the related information and communications technology projects with Umoja

22. Work on Umoja Extension 2, which includes conference and event management processes, will begin in the second half of 2015.[2] In the meantime, taking advantage of the significant improvements that the Umoja Foundation will bring to the way the Organization operates by harmonizing and centralizing access to important data across all duty stations, the PaperSmart Portal will be connected to the central repository of meetings-related documentation, including ODS. It will also include online registration features for meeting participants and be connected to the daily programme of meetings through the *Journal of the United Nations*.

Business continuity plans

23. Business continuity and disaster recovery are critical components of the PaperSmart concept in providing reliable, continuous and uninterrupted operation in servicing meetings at the United Nations. To minimize the impact of disruption, a business continuity plan that identifies potential threats and their resulting impact on business operations has been developed. This includes a framework for building organizational resilience and information and communications technology readiness. The business continuity plan is based on two backup systems: one "virtual mirror" in New York and a full backup in the service centre of the Office of Information and

[2] See the fourth progress report of the Secretary-General on the enterprise resource planning project (A/67/360).

Communications Technology at Brindisi, Italy, or Valencia, Spain. Loss of data should never exceed one business hour.

Training needs

24. The Department for General Assembly and Conference Management has already conducted extensive training sessions, involving nearly 400 staff members, mainly from Headquarters and Geneva, and also a team of interpreters from Nairobi, to prepare staff to service meetings held on the PaperSmart model. All official languages of the United Nations were covered by the training exercises.

Availability of the PaperSmart Portal

25. The ISPS Portal follows the same availability standard as the un.org website and is therefore available 24/7. The underlying infrastructure used by the Portal has been selected based on industry best practices for the provision of a highly available and resilient infrastructure for content delivery. A hybrid model of combined internal and external hosting enables the Portal to be easily available yet secure. Moreover, it can be operated from anywhere by Secretariat staff members who have been granted the appropriate administrative rights. Even if the main servers and mirror servers are physically located in the New York area, conference managers at other duty stations and regional commissions can service meetings from their locations.

Accessibility for persons with disabilities

26. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the accessibility of the Portal is designed in compliance with the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG 2.0) to make content accessible for disabled users and also for various computing devices, including mobile phones.

IV. Benefits of using the PaperSmart business model

27. Since the PaperSmart business model is essentially an additional cost-free service, it does not affect the quality of the more traditional paper-based services. However, it has various benefits over current methods.

Full multilingual delivery

28. The ISPS Portal has been developed in all the official United Nations languages. This means that not only conference documents but also the environment in which they are processed, including notifications of errors, are available to participants in all six languages. The Portal is unique in this sense, since other meetings tools are only available in one or two languages.

Global availability of statements of delegates in real time

29. Current procedures oblige delegates to bring a large number of paper copies of their statements for desk-to-desk distribution within the meeting room, as well as for Secretariat staff. In this context, a statement receives limited distribution. When the PaperSmart model is employed, delegates need to bring only two or three copies, which will then be scanned electronically and uploaded onto the Portal. A statement is thus made electronically available to certain services prior to delivery and on

paper if needed, for instance to the Chair and interpreters, and is then released to all delegates, the media and the general public the moment the delegate delivers the statement. In the electronic environment the statements are therefore readily available in real time to the world.

30. All 184 statements that were delivered at the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons were published in real time and accessed by users in 107 capitals around the world. This was the first full PaperSmart implementation in Geneva, following the technical support for PaperSmart services provided by the United Nations Office at Geneva to the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Doha.

31. At the opening and closing plenaries of the eighteenth session of the Conference of the Parties and during the high-level segment, 574 national and group statements posted on the Portal were downloaded over 2,600 times. Of the downloaded statements, those of the Group of 77 and China, the European Union and the least developed countries were the most popular.

Direct financial savings for permanent missions and Secretariat clients

32. During the main session of the General Assembly in late 2012, Member States made 2,604 statements during the deliberations of the six main committees. Assuming each statement is on average three pages long and each one is reproduced in 350 copies, this means that nearly 2 million sheets of paper would need to be used, at a cost running into hundreds of thousands of dollars for the Permanent Missions in New York. Full use of the PaperSmart model could, therefore, generate considerable financial and human resource savings for the Permanent Missions. Where there was previously a need to either revise a statement or make it available for the records, the PaperSmart model also makes replacements of statements easy without the need to once again provide the requisite paper copies.

33. Through the use of PaperSmart services for meetings of the Executive Boards of United Nations funds and programmes, savings have been channelled into country programmes. At its first PaperSmart meeting in late 2012, UN-Women saved an estimated $100,000 on that one Executive Board session alone and took the decision that the savings would be redirected to improving the lives of women and girls at the country level.

Facilitating engagement in meetings from capitals

34. This business model enables officials in capitals to observe a meeting held at a duty station. In many cases, officials may have an interest in one particular agenda item and through the Portal such an engagement is made possible. The Portal also makes available all documentation related to a meeting that would conventionally be available only when the meeting participant is at the meeting venue and is not limited to official documentation.

One tool for all meetings

35. In the same way as Umoja, the PaperSmart Portal could replace multiple solutions that have been developed by individual offices over time. Once the PaperSmart Portal is fully implemented, delegates will always experience the same

look, feel and functionalities of this service for meetings and conferences, independent of their geographical location. Most of the existing tools are vulnerable in terms of business continuity, multilingualism and availability, while the Portal has the necessary critical mass to maintain a high-quality service to Member States.

Prepares the United Nations to respond to global digital trends

36. The impact of global digital trends is also evidenced in meeting rooms, where increasing numbers of participants are carrying mobile devices. In this regard, digital access to information is a growing expectation. In recognizing this trend and by establishing the PaperSmart concept, the Organization is building a foundation for the future.

Knowledge management efficiencies

37. If meetings and conferences of the United Nations are held using the PaperSmart tool, materials will be easily available on a permanent basis. As such, it is an invaluable knowledge management tool. A newcomer to a Permanent Mission or the Secretariat would be able to relive a previous meeting by easily reviewing its agenda items and all related documents and data, including statements, audio files and press releases, on a single and user-friendly site. This will save considerable resources in training new staff. In addition, users will experience the same look, feel and functionality when studying different meetings of United Nations bodies and will be able to make use of this tool when transferred to another duty station or back to their capitals.

Accessibility for visually impaired and hearing-impaired participants

38. Accessibility, in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, is directly addressed by the PaperSmart model, which provides an infrastructure that fulfils some of the requirements of the Convention. The PaperSmart Portal itself has been made accessible in all the official languages to visually impaired participants who are using the various screen readers now available to convert written words into spoken words. In addition, the Portal can make it possible for the hearing-impaired to follow proceedings by means of subtitles and sign-language interpretation if such services are provided at a meeting. This method was first pioneered at the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012 as an initiative of the host country and received positive acknowledgement from various bodies.

Reducing waste

39. When paper copies are automatically distributed desk-to-desk at meetings, a considerable proportion of these pages typically end up as waste when the meeting is over. The PaperSmart concept provides a tool to minimize such waste. As an example, at the seventeenth session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, held in 2011 in Durban, South Africa, 2.5 million sheets of paper were used for printing documents. For the eighteenth session in 2012 in Doha, through the deployment of PaperSmart services, a savings of over 2 million sheets was achieved, equivalent to over 250 trees, which is a sizeable forest.